AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

Please amend claims 1 and 3 as follows. Please cancel Claims 7-8 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter therein. Please add new claims 9-13. No new matter is involved.

1. (currently amended)   An instant messaging (IM) system comprising: a plurality of clients having IM client applications of the same or different types; an IM server selectively connected to each of said clients via a computer network and providing a prescribed range of functionality to said clients; each client type having a unique identifier to enable access thereto via said computer network; and each client having a single account on said IM server for all of its client types that can access said IM server; wherein said account is identified by a unique identification number common to all of the client types of that client; and wherein each said unique identifier of each client type of [[a]] said client is matched to said unique identification number of the particular client.

2. (original) An instant messaging system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said client types include clients connected to the computer network via: (i) a PC-based instant messaging client application program; (ii) a GSM device on a GSM network; (iii) an internet browser-based client application; or (iv) an email-based client application.

3. (currently amended)   An instant messaging system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said prescribed range of functionality includes: (i) sending a textual message from one client to another; (ii) receiving a textual message sent by from one client to another; and (iii) identifying which members of a group of clients that a client is a member or prospective member of are currently connected to the computer network, or are probably so connected.

4. (previously presented) An instant messaging system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said computer network is the internet or direct electronic links of computers and other electronic devices.

5. (previously presented) An instant messaging system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said client types connected to the computer network via the GSM network have SMS capability and are initially connected via an SMSC server to control and manage said SMS therebetween, and wherein said SMSC server is directly connected to said IM server via said computer network.

6. (original) A method for instant messaging between a plurality of clients having IM applications of the same or different types, selectively interconnected to an IM server by way of a computer network, whereby each client type has a unique identifier to enable access thereto via the computer network, the method comprising the following steps: providing a single account on the IM server for each client in respect of all of its client types that can access the IM server; identifying the account by a unique identification number that is common to all of the client types of that client; and matching each unique identifier of each client type of that client to said unique identification number thereof.

7. (canceled)

8. (canceled)

9. (new) An instant messaging system as claimed in claim 2, wherein said client types includes a client connected to the computer network via a GSM device on a GSM network, said unique identification number includes the GSM carrier code of the carrier who provides telecommunication services to the GSM device.

10. (new) An instant messaging system as claimed in claim 3, wherein said prescribed range of functionality further includes replying to the sender client of a received message by reference to the sender client's unique identification number.

11. (new)   An IM server for use in an instant messaging system comprising a plurality of clients having IM client applications of the same or different types and where each client type has a unique identifier to enable access thereto via said computer network, said IM server selectively connected to each of said clients via a computer network and providing a prescribed range of functionality to said clients and wherein said IM server stores a single account for each client, said single account being in respect of all of the client's client types that can access said IM server and identifiable by a unique identification number common to all of the client types of said client.

12. (new)   A message sent from one client of an instant messaging system to another, where said instant messaging system comprises a plurality of clients having IM client applications of the same or different types; an IM server selectively connected to each of said clients via a computer network and providing functionality for sending said message from one client to another; each client type having a unique identifier to enable access thereto via said computer network; and each client having a single account on said IM server for all of its client types that can access said IM server, wherein said account is identified by a unique identification number common to all of the client types of that client; and wherein each said unique identifier of each client type of a said client is matched to said unique identification number of the particular client.

13. (new)   A computer readable medium containing executable software for operating an instant messaging system as described in claim 1.